



Representative Josh Harder

Working for the
Central Valley.

Coronavirus Service Corps

A Plan to Mobilize and Empower American Youth During the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Problem

Young Americans Struggle Amid Economic Chaos

The Coronavirus Pandemic and resulting economic chaos has led to the highest unemployment rate [since the Great Depression](#) – and history suggests young Americans could take the [hardest financial hit](#). Evidence also indicates that the impact on this cohort will not be temporary. Young people may struggle to achieve financial security for years to come. Those who were born in the 1980s and came of age during the Great Recession currently own 34 percent less wealth than what would have been projected based on the wealth accumulation of [previous generations](#).

Reopening Will Require Thousands of New Positions

At the same time, the Coronavirus Pandemic has created a desperate need for new temporary jobs. To successfully reopen our economy and ensure greater testing capacity, America will need to create potentially hundreds of thousands of new service positions. Some health experts have suggested America will need [300,000 contact tracers alone](#) to safely return to normal economic activity.

The Solution

The federal government is already substantially subsidizing state unemployment programs to help young Americans weather the storm. While providing unemployment assistance is a vital tool to get Americans back on their feet, instead of simply paying out millions in unemployment benefits, America has an opportunity to establish new programs to protect young people's financial security while also putting them to work completing projects in the national interest. Such a program would give young workers a chance to serve their country and earn a salary while also gaining portable job skills which can be put to use once normal economic activity resumes.

Representative Josh Harder, one of the youngest members of Congress – who also represents a disproportionately young district, is leading the charge to create a new program, The **Coronavirus Service Corps**, within the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The program would be a massive peacetime mobilization effort rivaling the Citizen Conservation Corps of the New Deal Era. Nicknamed “Roosevelt’s Tree Army,” the CCC employed nine million people over its lifespan. But it didn’t just pay young people to twiddle their thumbs. Civilian Conservation Corps workers built Great Smoky Mountain National Park. They laid hundreds of miles of road and dozens more bridges. Many of their projects are still standing – over 80 years later.

As during the Great Depression, the government has the capacity and responsibility to employ people who want to work but due to the economic crisis, have no opportunity to do so.

The organization would provide employment opportunities for up to a year for Americans at least 18 years of age. Participants will be split up into job tracks based on areas of interest and experience and work towards particular goals related to safely returning to normal life.

Job Tracks

1. Health Care

In addition to the need for more contract tracers, many communities – especially those in rural areas – have historically suffered from the lack of access to [health care personnel](#). These shortages are exacerbated during a time of severe stress on the American health care system. Rep. Harder’s plan would set to work training young people to assist in the administration of key health care services soon after the plan is enacted. All of these tracks would provide participants with the opportunity to serve nearly immediately while also gaining on-the-job training and experience relevant to future careers in the field.

Example positions: Phlebotomists to conduct testing, peer mental health counselors.

2. Social Services

Millions of older Americans have been stranded at home without access to their normal support system or the ability to obtain basic necessities, including food. Social safety net programs are also seeing a decline in volunteer capacity at a time when there is increased demand for support among low-income and vulnerable Americans. The Coronavirus Service Corps would be tasked with augmenting key social services, including the delivery of food to elders and others who are unable to venture out for food or medicine. This group would be tasked with assisting the homeless and providing other senior care services during the epidemic.

Example positions: Food service and delivery workers, senior care workers, homeless services workers.

3. Reopening the Economy

States which have started the reopening process have already encouraged businesses to assign employees to serve as [contact tracers](#). This presents an opportunity to commit resources to assisting businesses with the technical application of screening techniques, including taking customers’ temperature. The reopening process will also likely require assistance to workers who normally rely on child care. Changes to the industry and continuing social distancing guidelines are likely to preclude many larger child care centers from reopening.

Example positions: Contact tracers, temperature screeners, child care workers.

